IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows.

1. (Currently amended) A method of retrieving an image from at least one of an information-storage medium and an information network, said method comprising:

a) ~~entering~~ assigning a priority to a keyword ~~a multi-leveled retrieval request for~~ , said keyword operative as a tag, which is ~~tags~~ tagged to an image;

b) calculating ~~evaluating~~ an user's necessity for the image based on ~~at least the retrieval request and a number of the request~~ the priority assigned to the keyword; and

c) searching for the image from at least one of an information-storage medium and an information network and displaying the image, ~~in order of precedence~~ based on the user's necessity.

2. (Currently amended) The method of retrieving an image as defined in claim 1, wherein the ~~tags are~~ tag is classified by each class and the each class comprises a plurality of keywords.

3. (Currently amended) The method of retrieving an image as defined in claim 1, wherein the image is displayed in order of ~~precedence~~ priority of the user's necessity.

4. (Currently amended) An apparatus for retrieving an image from at least one of an information-storage medium and an information network, said apparatus comprising:

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a) a menu entry section that allows an user to ~~enter~~ assign a priority to a keyword ~~a multi-leveled retrieval request for~~ ,said keyword operative as a tag, which is ~~tags~~ tagged to an image;

b) a retrieval section calculating ~~evaluating~~ an user's necessity for the image based on ~~at least the retrieval request and a number of the request~~ the priority assigned to the keyword and searching for the image from at least one of an information-storage medium and an information network based on the user's necessity; and

c) a display section displaying the image outputted from the retrieval section according to the user's necessity.

5. (Currently amended) The apparatus for retrieving an image as defined in claim 4, wherein the ~~tags are~~ tag is classified by each class and the each class comprises a plurality of keywords.

6. (Currently amended) The apparatus for retrieving an image as defined in claim 4 or claim 5, wherein the image is displayed in order of ~~precedence~~ priority of the user's necessity.

7. (Original) The method of retrieving an image as defined in claim 2, wherein the user's necessity is evaluated according to a degree of necessity by the each class for the image.

8. (Original) The apparatus for retrieving an image as defined in claim 5, wherein the user's necessity is evaluated according to a degree of necessity by the each class for the image.

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9. (Currently amended) The method for retrieving an image as defined in claim 7, wherein:

the degree of necessity by [[the]] each class is obtained depending on i) a first value having a larger value as a number of the tags tagged to the image increase, ii) a second value having a larger value as a number of the tags tagged to the image decrease, and

contributions of the first value and the second value to the degree of necessity by [[the]] each class are determined by a number of non-zero components of a retrieval request signal by [[the]] each class.

10. (Currently amended) The apparatus for retrieving an image as defined in claim 8, wherein:

the degree of necessity by [[the]] each class is obtained depending on i) a first value having a larger value as a number of the tags tagged to the image increase, ii) a second value having a larger value as a number of the tags tagged to the image decrease, and

contributions of the first value and the second value to the degree of necessity by [[the]] each class are determined by a number of non-zero components of a retrieval request signal by [[the]] each class.

11. (Currently amended) The method for retrieving an image as defined in claim 9, wherein:

when the number of the non-zero value is larger than a first predetermined value, the first

value mainly contributes to the degree of necessity by [[the]] each class;

when the number of the non-zero value is smaller than the first predetermined value, the second value mainly contributes to the degree of necessity by [[the]] each class; and

which of the first value and the second value mainly contributes to the degree of necessity by [[the]] each class changes with rapidity determined by a second predetermined value in a neighborhood of a point that the number of no-zero components equals the first value.

12. (Currently amended) The apparatus for retrieving an image as defined in claim 10, wherein:

when the number of the non-zero value is larger than a first predetermined value, the first value mainly contributes to the degree of necessity by [[the]] each class;

when the number of the non-zero value is smaller than the first predetermined value, the second value mainly contributes to the degree of necessity by [[the]] each class; and

which of the first value and the second value mainly contributes to the degree of necessity by [[the]] each class changes with rapidity determined by a second predetermined value in a neighborhood of a point that the number of no-zero components equals the first value.

13. (Currently amended) The method of retrieving an image as defined in claim 2, wherein the image is displayed in order of ~~precedence~~ priority of the user's necessity.

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14. (Currently amended) The apparatus for retrieving an image as defined in claim 5, wherein the image is displayed in order of ~~precedence~~ priority of the user's necessity.